MaCoTra

ORGANISATIONS THAT TRANSFORM

Singing CHORUS 2:

Collaborative Listening to Business Stakeholders

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Abstract for Each of the MaCoTra Seven-CHORUS-Article CHAIN

This article has its genesis in my doctoral study with the University of South Africa’s (UNISA) School of Business Leadership (SBL) from 2001 to 2003. An electronic version of the thesis is available on the UNISA Institutional Repository. Twelve (12) books have since been self-published – four (4) in 2011, seven (7) in 2012 and one (1) in 2013. Seventeen (17) articles, derived from the study, are available on the University of Zimbabwe Institutional Repository since 2013.

The overarching lens for all works is the Madzivire Collaborative Transformation (MaCoTra) model developed during my UNISA study. The MaCoTra model is based on the metaphor of seven (7) CHORUSES. Each of the model CHORUSES constitutes one (1) book of the MaCoTra Seven-CHORUS-Book CHAIN, self-published in 2012, and an article forming the MaCoTra Seven-CHORUS-Article CHAIN. The structure of each of the 7 articles is meant to ease referencing across the Seven-CHORUS-Article CHAIN. Article 1 covers new insights on CHORUS 1, Article 2 on CHORUS 2, Article 3 on CHORUS 3, Article 4 on CHORUS 4, Article 5 on CHORUS 5, Article 6 on CHORUS 6 and Article 7 on CHORUS 7.

Having made a random selection of thirteen (13) private sector, eleven (11) public sector and eleven (11) civic sector organisations for inclusion in the Seven-CHORUS-Article CHAIN and Seven-CHORUS-Book CHAIN, I documented my experiences in applying each CHORUS in these organisations from 2003 to 2012. I relied heavily on documents that I accessed and/or created during my consulting assignments. After a sector based analysis, I have included major reflections that I consider relevant in understanding the dynamics at play for each CHORUS. In some cases, I have also leaned on ‘words of wisdom’ from thought leaders to spice the reflections.

I believe that the organisations sampled reflected polar types in the way they engaged in CHORUS 2. Of course, there have been discords particularly when some organisational members did not fully cuddle in CHOIR or CHORUS practice.

I trust that the Seven-CHORUS-Article CHAIN will energise those scholars/practitioners who have been questioning how to apply the MaCoTra model. This preface is a MODIFIED MELODY to suit each of the 7 articles, much like a CHORUS!!

This article features new insights on; and a generic framework for SINGING; MaCoTra CHORUS 2: Collaborative Listening to Business Stakeholders.

1.0 Introduction

The overarching frame for this article is the Madzivire Collaborative Transformation (MaCoTra) model (Exhibit 1). The MaCoTra model is also reflected in my 2011 book publication entitled MaCoTra Singing ORGANISATIONS THAT TRANSFORM: ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES in the Emerging Economy of Zimbabwe and each book of the Seven-CHORUS-Book CHAIN self-published in 2012.

Outlining the CHORUS-based MaCoTra model differentiating features, I indicate:

The MaCoTra model encapsulates the transformation song composed of seven CHORUSES for the organizational choir.

Each CHORUS may be sung on its own and also in combination with any one or more of the other CHORUSES. This means an organization may transform as a result of work on one or more CHORUSES.

Further, from a systems perspective, each CHORUS is a subsystem of suprasystem - the total MaCoTra model. In this regard, whatever is done to any one of the CHORUS subsystems affects the other subsystems and has an effect on the suprasystem.
What the MaCoTra model advocates is for each organizational member to go beyond singing individual CHORUSES. MaCoTra invites all organizational members to synchronize the CHORUSES resulting in a melodious overarching organizational choir – the transformation itself.

The MaCoTra colour coding stresses that diversity has to be celebrated as part of organizational transformation.

What a way to celebrate it through any combination of the seven MaCoTra song CHORUSES, and dance!

I also prescribe the MaCoTra Model for companies in Zimbabwe.

Sources: Madzivire (2003) & Madzivire (2011:76)

Exhibit 1: The Madzivire Collaborative Transformation (MaCoTra) Model
This article is the SECOND of a Seven-CHORUS-Article CHAIN (Exhibit 2), related to MaCoTra CHORUS 2: COLLABORATIVE LISTENING TO BUSINESS STAKEHOLDERS.

Exhibit 2: The MaCoTra Seven-CHORUS-Article Chain

The article is a ‘Symphony of the MaCoTra CHORUS 2 Experiences in the Three Sectors from 2003 to 2012’ in which I summarise the major experiences I had applying MaCoTra CHORUS 2. In this CHORUS 2 article, I provide further insights on this CHORUS given what I covered in my doctoral thesis and subsequent publications. Organisations, some places/features/products/services and participants have been code-named.
for anonymity. Where experiences have been drawn from the same organisation, its code name has been retained throughout the Seven-CHORUS-Article CHAIN. This is meant for those readers who are interested in appreciating the interfaces in experiences in that organisation across some or all of the seven (7) MaCoTra CHORUSES.

1.1 An Overview of CHORUS 2

Explaining the seven (7) MaCoTra model CHORUSES, this is part of what I said in my earlier work in connection with CHORUS 2:

Collaborative listening to staff in forums leaves staff feeling they no longer work for a company but belong to the company. With this new mindset, they go out of their way to serve each other and serve the business stakeholders. Informal and formal settings should be used to listen to the business stakeholders using an adapted version of what the staff experienced in CHORUS 1.

The challenge is to allow each business stakeholder talk about their business. The business stakeholder should give detail regarding issues such as their conversion processes, nature of competition in their business, how the competition in their business might change, and promises the company could make to enhance value in the business stakeholder’s type of business.

Understanding the business of the stakeholders places the company in a position to provide promises that create win-win and lasting relationships. This also reinforces the notion of independence and interdependence that fosters further collaboration with business stakeholders.

Staff need to create songs linking company values, visions and strategies to the business stakeholders’ kind of work to embed a culture of collective learning with the business stakeholders. ...

Through collaborative listening, business stakeholders get emotionally and spiritually attached to the organization that serves. Business stakeholders are prepared to participate in the next CHORUSES as sacred contributors to the transformation of the organisation.

What is critically important is that business stakeholders be given an opportunity to indicate what they would wish to be provided by the company for them to call it the best company. Each time a competitor catches up in terms of what they promise the business stakeholder, the company draws one item from the wish list and creates more value in packaging the new promise. The wish list affords the company an opportunity to be distinctive by being one step ahead of competitors in terms of business stakeholder (people) care.


1.2 Rhythm of the MaCoTra CHORUS 2 Experiences in Private Sector Organisations

Of the three sectors, the private sector had more pronounced collaboration in listening to business stakeholders. Such listening was in both formal and informal environments. The playback of the stakeholder needs confirmed this.

The START/STOP/CONTINUE, CAR NOW & WHY, CAR IN FIVE YEARS & WHY exercises in organisations, such as PrivateSector1 and PrivateSector2 yielded some needs representative of a wish list, explicit and implicit needs.
I took this as pointing in the direction of how to come up with a general framework for CHORUS 2, which is what I have done in Exhibit 3 below.

Throughout the years, there appears to be a growing conviction that employees are the NUMBER 1 stakeholder. Private sector organisations that ignore this are paying for it.

1.3 Rhythm of the MaCoTra CHORUS 2 Experiences in Public Sector Organisations

Collaborative listening to business stakeholders ranged from minimal to multi-stakeholder. There was mixed reaction to employees as the number 1 stakeholder. Some of the defensive postures were more to earn political mileage from those who would approve the final strategies.

Similar to the experience in two private sector organisations highlighted above, the START/STOP/CONTINUE, CAR NOW & WHY, CAR IN FIVE YEARS & WHY exercises in PublicSector1’s Departments yielded some needs representative of a wish list, explicit and implicit needs. I took this as confirming the need for a generic framework for CHORUS 2, such as Exhibit 3 below.

1.4 Rhythm of the MaCoTra CHORUS 2 Experiences in Civic Sector Organisations

The nature of the work done in civic sector organisations was predominantly determined at their centres, mostly international. The humanitarian focus implied that the stakeholders’ needs had been expressed elsewhere. With the exception of two organisations, I had limited experience with CHORUS 2 in this sector. The concentration of the needs was explicit.

2.0 Singing MaCoTra CHORUS 2

My experience-based invitation to the singing of MaCoTra CHORUS 2 is grounded in the application of Exhibit 3 – a generic framework for this CHORUS. This framework feeds from what I have crystallised as the MaCoTra CHORUS 1 generic framework in my first article of the Seven-CHORUS-Article CHAIN entitled *MaCoTra ORGANISATIONS THAT TRANSFORM Singing CHORUS 1: Holding Collaborative Promise Delivery Forums with Staff*. Exhibit 3, therefore, assumes that an organisation has built employee capabilities to conduct productive conversations with business stakeholders. These productive conversations include conversations for relationships, possibilities, opportunities, actions and results.

The business stakeholders, like what the employees will have experienced, are given an opportunity to assess the organisation. Such assessment gives business stakeholders an opportunity to indicate what the organisation should STOP/START/CONTINUE doing to deliver value. Business stakeholders also brand the organisation through the car metaphor justifying why they associate/will associate the organisation with a specific CAR NOW and in FIVE YEARS TIME respectively.
All the needs will initially be in the WISH LIST circle. The idea is to isolate explicit needs from implicit needs. This is enhanced by employees appreciating the difference between foreground and background conversations, with special emphasis on straight talk. In my MaCoTra Technology Toolkits, I indicate in connection with these two sets of conversations:

- Straight talk: ...
  - Brings background conversations (what we think and do not say) into the foreground (what we say) for open and honest dialogue
    - background conversations usually consist of
      - what we are afraid to say;
      - what we think the other can’t or won’t hear;
      - what we think is unacceptable or unpleasant to hear; and
      - what is politically incorrect

Source: MaCoTra Technology Toolkits (2003 – 2012)

So, whereas business stakeholders might actually express a need – say it out -, employees have to check whether such foreground conversation is an expression of the real need. Employees need to go further by searching for the background to the expressed need. Unpacking the background conversations will enable an organisation to avoid dealing with the tips of icebergs. Effective listening to stakeholder needs requires immersing into the wish list or explicit needs to getting to the bottom of the icebergs – the implicit needs.

And enjoying singing MaCoTra CHORUS 2, under the currents!
REFERENCES


FOR FURTHER READING

